

YOSEMITE II BACKCOUNTRY TRAIL CREW
JULY 2013 MONTHLY REPORT
Anna Asp, Backcountry Trails Supervisor

OVERVIEW:

Having finished taking turns sharing precautionary advice and reviewing rules regarding weekend safety for that morning's safety topic, we stood together in a tight circle, our arms resting on each other's shoulders or around each other's waists and looked to the day's KP for inspiration. I noticed his nose was smudged with dust freshly acquired from the PT routine's "servant's pose" and his hair was a little wild and tousled, possibly from a semi-restless night's sleep spent guarding the kitchen against intruding bears. He began to speak, and my focus shifted to listening; he explained that he was about to share something he'd written himself after some careful reflection on the subject of respect. As his words spilled out, his thoughtful message struck me, and my gaze shifted again, focusing now beyond the present moment as I saw instead a person who had allowed himself to be inspired by his own backcountry experience – seeing the beauty and strength of the mountains surrounding him, the meaning behind working his hardest to provide access to them through trail work, the relationships formed and nurtured within his crew, the insight into who he is – and I, too, was inspired: Humbled by the reminder of what a great thing it is to take advantage of a trail season's worth of opportunities to grow.

We the Yosemite II Backcountry trail crew find ourselves now stationed out of Stubblefield Canyon on the Pacific Crest Trail 24 miles away from our CCC van and truck parked and patiently waiting at Hetch Hetchy Reservoir for our September return. Our camp move from Tiltill Valley was a tad earlier than we'd planned after we got the surprising news that our camp gear would be moved by helicopter instead of by the packers and their strings of mules. Thankfully we were taken care of by our quick-thinking foreman Doug Matheson, who got his sponsor staff trained and ready, so when the move day arrived, all went smoothly both in the air and on the ground as the crew confidently made its way by foot, bearing full packs and some immediately necessary tools for 14.5 miles first up 3,150' and then down 1,050' until finally reaching our camp site at the bottom of Stubblefield Canyon at 7,750'.

From here we intend, and have indeed already begun, to improve the trail through extensive rock projects and also to familiarize ourselves with the beautiful, open, high country of Yosemite's extreme north end. Let the adventure continue – with renewed conviction to seize each day!

WORK PRODUCTION:

In the beginning of July we finished up the maintenance around Tiltill as we worked toward Rancheria, completing 1.5 miles of maintenance. We received some extensive and much appreciated training offered by our NPS foreman Doug Matheson and sponsors Charlie Ihrke, Tyrus Klasovsky, and Rael McGinnis: rockwork terminology and diagrams, building model rock projects, rock quarrying technique and safety, and helicopter camp move procedure and safety. The last of our work in Tiltill Valley saw us trying to tame the muddy meadows with 4 sections of causeway, totaling 13.3 linear yards, and we got in some quick rock work before our camp move: 3.5 linear yards single-tier, 3.2 linear yards rip-rap, 1 check, 1 pan, and 16 ft² multi-tier.

Next on the agenda was taking down camp so that we could set it up again bigger and better than ever in Stubblefield Canyon, our final home of the season. Camp includes a screen-covered sump pit with constructed spooge and dishline tables; maintenance fly, CCC personal gear canvas tent; kitchen

equipped with 11 bearbox storage / oil cloth-covered prep tables, propane-powered oven and stovetop, griddle, jet burner, Coleman 2 burner stove, 2 shelves for hanging storage, propane lanterns, custom made knife block, dish box, and dust-covered boxed storage for miscellaneous non-hanging dishes; 3-part water filtration system with manual pump guzzler; solar battery recharging system; triple-seated latrine; wood-splitting station; bug tent; our camp center: the fire pit and 25 gallon jungle can surrounded by Yosemite's infamous / renowned folding camp chairs (mysteriously one shy of seating our full 17 person crew); recycling station; pull-up bar; plenty (ok, I guess I've been pretty specific so far, may as well specify 11) of 5-gallon buckets to haul water up from Stubblefield Creek; KP's granite-floored, privacy-screened solar shower; a sandy-bottomed, so far sunny bathing spot below the convergence of Thompson and Stubblefield Creeks; our reason for being here: the tool station complete with shovels, rakes, loppers, handsaws, pick-mattocks, long and short rock bars, 16 and 12 pound double jacks, single jacks, 3-extended pole saw, splitting axe, splitting mauls, splitting wedges, kindling axe, rehandling kit, Hilti rock drill and generator, TU-17 grip hoist and rigging gear, Husqvarna chainsaws; and personal CCC and NPS tents spread far and wide to the north and west of camp settled between the black-flecked, lichen-covered granite boulders and lodgepole pines, red firs, junipers, corn lily flowers, and quaking aspens and always in a snag-free zone within ear-shot of camp to enable a hasty assist should the KP need it while guarding the kitchen from curious black bears (or curious PCT through-hikers).

With camp set up, we busted through 6.85 maintenance miles and started rock projects both on the southbound and northbound sides of Stubblefield Creek along the PCT between 1.2 – 2.3 miles from camp, but none complete before month's end, so those numbers will roll into August.

CURRICULUM & ACTIVITIES:

Back Strength and Flexibility Assessment started us off and was led this month by corpsmembers Gillian, Brian, and Chavez. The results for July's PT bests were slightly affected by a rather tired crew after their first full week of rock work. Though they stand on tired legs, the numbers still stand proudly thus: plank – Kelli 4:01, superman – Kyle 8:01, chair pose – Kelli 6:01, push-ups – Ryan 80, pull-ups – Ryan 15. Classes included reading aloud John Muir's essay *The Tree Ride*; massage; music appreciation; conflict resolution; curriculum review games (the Jeopardy winners being Team “Ehhr” and composed of Sean, Cass, and Gillian); letters / essays written to the Yosemite Conservancy; corpsmember classes taught by Cass (DNA mapping and the divergence of subspecies), Brandt (philosophical discussion of the sustainability of modern wilderness), and Herbert (intro to speaking Tagalog); and life stories shared by corpsmembers Ryan, Chavez, and by Supervisor Anna.

Activities included Yosemite II's 2013 Olympic Games with the competing countries of Wales (Brandt, Chavez, Gillian), Philippines (Andrae, Ryan, Herbert), Ecuador (Sean, Kelli, Kyle), and Scotland (Douglas, Brian, Cass) and featuring the events 5 gallon bucket relay (winner: Wales), human wheelbarrow race (winner: Scotland), liter water chug (winner: Ecuador), tug o'war (winner: Philippines), sack race relay (winner: Wales), 3-legged race (winner Philippines), and a pork 'n' beans eating contest (winner: Wales). Overall winner with 23 pts was the Philippines “Team Philly” with a game-winning consistent display of silver medals. We had a Christmas Party on July 25th with Christmas tree hand-crafted decorations and a white elephant gift exchange. The trend of the night seemed to be stealing gifts from Brandt.

WEEKEND DESTINATIONS:

Tilden Lake, Lake Vernon, Lyell Canyon, Mount Lyell, Mammoth Peak, Rancheria Falls, Rancheria

Mountain, Pleasant Valley, Paiute Creek x-country exploration, Benson Lake, Smedberg Lake, Bear Valley, Bearup Lake, Rogers Lake, Volunteer Peak, Dorothy Lake, Dorothy Lake caves, Harriet Lake, Rock Island Pass, Mule Pass, Matterhorn Peak, Matterhorn Canyon, Benson Pass, Wilma Lake, Otter Lake, Haystack Peak, Schofield Peak, Richardson Peak, Price Peak, Kendrick Peak, and Michie Peak.

AFFIRMATIONS:

Thank you to Ed Canapary and Helicopter pilot 551 Richard for helping with camp move; to NPS for teaching rock work skills; to Roy for hiking to Tiltill Valley to visit Kelli and then joining her group's weekend adventure to Tilden Lake; to the Yosemite Conservancy for their continued support and for letting us know that they're thinking of the two Yosemite crews by generously sending us patches, stickers, and goodies; and last in the list but certainly not last in our hearts thank you to the support – written, packaged, or silent – from friends and family. The crew has reached a rather introspective phase in the season, and I often hear expressions of gratitude and an increased sense of appreciation for the strength and love they receive through their relationships with family and friends. We couldn't do this without you.

CORPSMEMBER WORDS OF WISDOM:

from corpsmember Ryan Garcia: “Respect is one of the most important factors in a relationship with another person or within a crew. Boundaries must be set and respected. Don't hide yourself from having fun, Enjoying life, and living the moment, but recognize the limits around you. You must seek the truths in what's around you and accept them for what they are.”